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OFFICE OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS

Washington, D. C.

MEMORANDUM FOR: ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FOR POLICY COORDINATION

SUBJECT: Albanian Operation - Fate of VALUABLE Teams
in Albania

1. On 29 October 1949 [] informed [] that, according to information received that morning from the British, the first British party to enter Albania, at the beginning of September 1949, had recently come out of Albania into Greece and was in the hands of the Greek authorities. [] also mentioned that the British said that they were in radio contact with all the remaining groups (five) in Albania.
2. In connection with the above we are now in a position to advise you that Nysen Isufi and Bido Kuka entered Greece from Albania on 16 October 1949. On their arrival in Yannina, they claimed to be members of a resistance band formed in Vlone on orders of a nationalist committee and to have operated in the Kurvelesh region; this story was regarded with suspicion, and they were put in prison.
3. On 21 October 1949 Ali Duran (presumably Turen Agiko) and Ahmet Kuka gave themselves up to the Gendarmerie command at Filiates and were questioned by a representative of Greek army intelligence. They stated that they had been in an IRO camp at Bari in June 1949 when Abas Ermeni selected 30 Albanians and turned them over to the British, who took them to Malta for training, four or five as W/T operators and the rest in sabotage and the use of weapons. They revealed the names of 22 of these Albanians to Greek army intelligence.

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4. According to the story which these two Albanians told the Greeks, they were members of a mission organized on 9 September, composed of nine persons, and dispatched in the Koronarium area on the night of 16 September. Of this mission one group of five persons was to proceed toward Kavalash and Gjirakastari; this group included the leader, Ruzhë Ruzhë or Ruzhë (presumably identical with Ruzhë Ruzhë), Ali Durrani (presumably identical with Turan Aglio), Ahmet Ruzhë, Rido Ruzhë and Ruzhë Isufi. The other group of four, which was to proceed in the direction of Vlami, included the leader, Sami Lepenica, Ruzhë Lepenica, Sogol Ruzhë (presumably identical with Zogolli Ruzhë) and Sogol Ruzhë (possibly identical with Sogol Ruzhë).

5. All members of the mission wore new British uniforms, complete with tunics. All of them were armed with Thompson sub-machine guns, with 300 rounds of ammunition, and Parabellum pistols. Each of the two groups was equipped with a V/T set, two pairs of binoculars, civilian clothing, and forged Albanian identity cards; each man had been given 50 gold sovereigns.

6. On 20 September 1949, before the mission had divided, the nine men were ambushed by an Albanian pursuit detachment at a place called Batakist, near Dukagjin. At this time Sami Lepenica was killed and the other three members of his group were captured. The first group, which before the ambush had sent a radio message on the difficulties caused by the presence of the pursuit detachments in the area, then hid its V/T set and fled to the Mokra region. However, this group fell into another ambush at Kivran and the leader was killed. The remaining four separated after agreeing to escape to Greece as they had been ordered to do if they were hard pressed.

7. On 24 October 1949 the four men who escaped were taken to Athens. On being questioned, they said that they were under instructions from Abas Ruzhë and the British to reveal their true names only to the Greek General Alios' Directorate, which allegedly knew their pseudonyms and was aware of their real mission. Isufi and Rido Ruzhë, V/T operators equipped with sets of type 694 and with foot-powered generators, said that they had been ordered to get in touch with the mission of Ruzhë Ruzhë, for whom Sami Lepenica had instructions, the nature of which was unknown to Isufi and Ruzhë. The escapees turned over to the Greeks two sub-machine guns, 174 gold sovereigns and other items.

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8. We are now in receipt of information that, in addition to the four persons referred to in para. 7 above, six more members of those teams originally recruited by the British arrived in Greece on 29 October and were transferred to Athens on 31 October. The Greek military authorities advised the chief of the (British) Balkan Counter-Intelligence Service, who made arrangements to fly all ten men to Italy on 2 November 1949.

9. The above information would appear to be substantiated by a report from an independent source inside Albania that three persons were killed at Gjirokastra on 3 October 1949; the names of those killed were given as: Sami Shkëlzi Lepidoni, Dagjelli Rendi Plisana of Gjirokastra and Myzeq Rendi Lepidoni; the three of them, including Plisana of Gjirokastra, were described as coming from Vlone. In addition, on or about the same date a certain "Miranda Hajji" from Kiviera, Durres, is reported to have been killed. This information shows that the above report appeared in the Albanian newspaper "Gjilgjeria", which did not say from where those persons came but said that they were agents from outside. According to rumor, others also came from Italy and some were allegedly captured in other attacks. It was stated that those who were killed lost their lives because they moved too much by day.

10. We have just been informed that the October 26 edition of "Gjilgjeria" carries a story dated 6 September from Tirana to the effect that the Albanian Ministry of Interior had announced that four war criminals had been captured or killed in the region of Vlone and Tepelene. The names of those "war criminals" were given as: Sami Shkëlzi Lepidoni, Dagjelli Rendi Plisip (from the region of Vlone), Myzeq Rendi Lepidoni and Rendi Rendi Myzeq. The story said that those men had left Albania after the liberation and had recently returned to Albania, apparently with Greek assistance, in order to make propaganda against the present Albanian government.

11. None of the above information has been passed to any of your representatives in the field.

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12. In connection with the above reports, we should like very much to know if the Greeks (i.e., the Greek General Aliens' Directorate) were briefed by the British on VALUABLE, as is clearly indicated in para. 7 above. In this same connection it is important for us to know if the British instructed the Albanian agents to flee to Greece if they were unable to remain in Albania.

13. It is also of importance to us to have any available information regarding the statement in para 7. that this mission was under orders to make contact with the Caka mission, and that Sam Lepenica was bringing him instructions. We presume that the individual referred to is identical with Ethem Caka, who was dispatched to Albania in an operation recruited jointly by OSO and [] and who has been previously identified to your office as an OSO agent.]

14. In obtaining further information from the British, which we assume will be volunteered or made available on your general request, please ascertain whether an agreement was reached by the British with the Greek General Aliens' Directorate or with any other Greek Intelligence Service.

15. In connection with British relations with the Greek General Aliens' Directorate it is of urgent interest to OSO to learn whether the British indicated any American participation in operation VALUABLE, or whether the agents for whom they were arranging safe haven were described as strictly British agents, dispatched from the Corfu base. This information is needed by OSO to protect our established relationship with [] . We also need to know what the British may have told Greek Military Intelligence about United States participation when their agents were released to them.

16. In view of the sensitivity of the sources of the information contained in this memorandum it is urgently requested that no dissemination of any portion of this information be made to your field representatives, or to the British, without prior clearance with OSO.

17. We shall appreciate your comments regarding the questions raised in paragraphs 12, 13, 14, and 15.

Ref. SO DB-20024

[]
Assistant Director
Special Operations

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